

His Work – Our Fruitful Labors

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-8

We briefly touched this subject when we studied, earlier, **“Gathering His People.”** An underlying theme, in our life, should be looking for ways to help others to know the Lord and join the “forever family.” In I Corinthians 9:22-23 Paul said, **“... I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker (a fellow partaker / that I may share) thereof with you.”** Paul desired to have his brothers and sisters in Christ to be partners with him in the work of the gospel. In I Corinthians 10:33 Paul also stated, **“... I [try to] please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit (good / benefit), but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”** This is a very unselfish motivation for living – part of the package of dying to self, bearing our cross, etc. (Matthew 16:24-25; II Corinthians 5:14-21).

Besides the partnership of mind, soul, and body, there is also a way to be partners in the work of the gospel with finances and material resources given to His ministers. Gaius was commended for his hospitality and support of other believers, especially those who were travelling ministers. He became a **“fellow helper (fellow worker / companion in labor) to the truth.”** (III John 1:1, 5-8). We are taught to support Christ’s ministers (I Corinthians 9:1-11, 13-14; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:10-19). We are also to give help and support to His people in general, along with having compassion on the poor of this world (Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 14:12-14; Acts 20:33-35 [Note verse 35 – This is the only time, in the New Testament, that Christ was quoted with no record of it in the four Gospels – John 21:25]; Romans 12:9-13; Galatians 2:9-10; 6:2-10; Ephesians 4:28; II Corinthians chapters 8-9 [especially II Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-15]; I Timothy 6:17-19; James 1:27; 2:1-9; I John 3:16-18).

Before we can effectively be partners with others in the Lord’s work, we must be sure that we are partners with Christ himself. So our emphasis in this lesson is that we should be vitally aligned with Christ in our labors for Him – rather, **with** Him (Romans 15:17-18). Perhaps there could not be a better text to describe this than **John 15:1-8.**

You need to know who you are in this allegory. (John 15:1, 5a)

The Heavenly Father is in charge. He is the **“husbandman / vinedresser / gardener.”** His focus is on **“the true vine.”**

The Son of God, who is **“the true vine”** – is the object of the husbandman’s care and the source of His pleasure (Jeremiah 9:23-24 cp. I Corinthians 1:29-31; Matthew 3:16-17; 17:1-5; John 8:29).

Those who profess to be disciples of Christ are **“the branches”** of the vine. They are in some way attached to Christ – identified with Christ. But not all branches have the necessary vital relationship to the vine and, therefore, are not fruitful.

The destiny of the branches depends on the relationship they have with the true vine. (John 15:2-6)

Fruitless branches are taken away and burned. They cannot bear fruit because they do not have the vital *“abiding / remaining”* connection to the vine. Some refer to such branches as “sucker branches.” They use up the plant’s strength, but will never be productive.

Fruitful branches are kept and *“purged / pruned”* (Greek = *“cleaned”* cp. vs. 3 *“clean”*) so that they produce more fruit. These branches have the vital *“abiding / remaining connection”* to the vine.

What does this *“abiding / remaining”* relationship mean to us in reality? (John 15:4-5, 7-8)

Many profess to know Christ. They attach themselves to Him by words, actions, and often by joining religious movements, organizations / churches. The visible connection is outward, but lacks the real life-giving source of nourishment of Christ’s Spirit and Christ’s Word. Therefore, the relationship is fruitless. It is not an active part of the work of the vine. It takes up space and draws energy from the vine – energy that is supposed to produce something (i.e. the fruit of the Spirit and the seed that can multiply the life of the vine).

Others truly know Christ in a vital way. The work of the vine is to feed its branches through photosynthesis (leaves), rain, and ground nutrients (roots) which produces health, growth, and fruit. Therefore, true disciples are united with Christ and each other. They are fed by Christ through the sunshine of God’s love, and the water of God’s word, and the soil of God’s sovereign grace (Ephesians 3:14-19; John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; 1:14-17; Romans 5:1-5; 8:28-39). We are one with Christ, even as the branches are a part of the vine. The resulting fruit is evidence of the vital healthy connection between Christ and His disciples (John 15:9-12, 16; Philippians 1:11). An active prayer life with answered prayers is another evidence of the *“abiding / remaining”* relationship with Christ (John 14:12-14; 15:16; 16:23-27; I John 3:22-24; 5:12-15). An even greater result is that the Father is glorified and pleased (Ephesians 1:12; Romans 8:8-9; Hebrews 11:6).

Let’s consider the servant / slave of Christ (Matthew 23:8,10; Galatians 1:10)

Christ purchased us. We are His servants / slaves. We are on earth for His purpose and glory (I Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:23; Romans 5:21 – 6:23; 8:28; Ephesians 1:12; 6:5-9; I Peter 2:13-16; Revelation 1:1). For Christ to use us, we need to do Christ’s work Christ’s way (I Corinthians 9:24-27; II Timothy 2:5). Yielded to Him, we make ourselves available, so that He can do His work through us (Romans 13:14; 15:17-18; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 2:12-13; 4:13).

Note three perspectives that a good servant / slave should have:

- To obey commands
- To please his master when there is no precise command
- To work in harmony with other servants / slaves